

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

JULY 1996

ONE DOLLAR



William L. Woodfin, Jr



As you will read in this issue of Virginia Wildlife, the Department's Law Enforcement Division has come a long way and is building for the future. The story is familiar. In the beginning, game wardens were provided little training or equipment, but were required to be tough, resilient and persistent. Since those early days the Department has continued to hire capable people, trained them well and provided them with cutting edge technology. As of January of this year, laptop computers have been issued to all of our law enforcement field staff. This has helped to improve information flow and communications, and we continue to improve our efficiency with this new equipment.

Other equipment has been provided to game wardens, including ATVs (all terrain vehicles), night vision equipment for detecting poachers and instruments for screening boaters who may be under the influence of alcohol were also included. The Department has replaced its aging fleet of

patrol boats with vessels built to last into the 21st century. Upgraded equipment helps our Law Enforcement Division focus on customer needs and expectations and the Division's core mission of enforcing Virginia's boating and wildlife laws.

For example, we have been able to better respond to boating accidents by deploying specialized watercraft that can access all parts of the state's waters in improved ways, particularly some of the smaller, more difficult waterways. These new, smaller craft allow wardens increased interaction with the anglers who frequent these streams and rivers.

Other advances for Law Enforcement include continuing education for wardens and the support our wardens receive from other law enforcement entities. Interagency cooperation is often essential to one of the most serious tasks faced by game wardens, that of searching for persons who have disappeared while boating. However, the best remedy for boating accidents is for them not to happen at all. The old saying that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" is certainly true. Consistent with this, wardens are continuing their efforts to provide educational opportunities in our classrooms to talk about hunting and fishing safety, as well as boating safety. The future of our boating and wildlife resources rests in the hands of our children, and time invested today will pay dividends tomorrow.

As in earlier times, wardens still know the wilds of Virginia as well as anyone, and they still have a

wide variety of law enforcement challenges. Their interaction with the public almost always takes place when people are intent on recreation and fun. This means that encounters with law enforcement officers, even though brief and civil, may be viewed by some as unwanted. The presence of wardens, in the woods or on the water, means that wildlife, fishing and boating laws are being enforced for the health, safety and welfare of all resource users. This is only a problem for those bending or breaking the law.

Law enforcement has been an important theme for government in recent times, and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries promotes safety to those focused on wildlife, fishing or boating. The Department's game wardens help deliver that important message. Whether it's in the hundreds of hunter education classes the Department oversees through its Law Enforcement Division, the hundreds of volunteers that make hunter education possible, representing the Department to school children or checking to see if you bought the required licenses, our game wardens are on the job. □



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Cover: Game Wardens on patrol. *Photo by ©Dwight Dyke*
 Back cover: *Illustration by Norman Rainock*



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GAME WARDENS:



1950

SERVING VIRGINIA WITH PRIDE

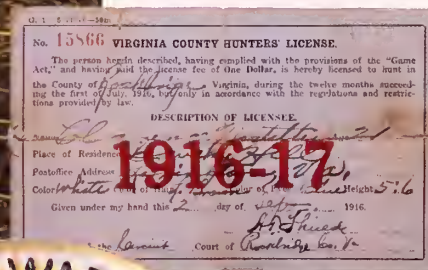


Nearly 80 years have passed since the first wardens carried their badges into Virginia's woods. Today they are one of the nation's most highly trained, efficient and best equipped wildlife law enforcement organizations.



Dwight Dyke

Left: Checking a hunter's license and weapon always means going where the hunter is, and that often involves slogging through a marsh or a long hike into the woods.



Early hunting license



Badge
1916-1924

by Jack Randolph

When the Game Commission was first formed in 1917, game wardens were given a law book and a badge and told to go out there and enforce the law. Wardens provided their own transportation and sidearms. They had no for-

mal training and no radios to call for backup when they needed assistance.

Perhaps the most difficult thing was that the public did not hold the same positive view toward wildlife laws the majority of us hold today.

Wardens were dealing with a public that wasn't too eager to take wildlife laws seriously. This was understandably true during tough times such as the Depression, when many were forced to live off the land as best they could.



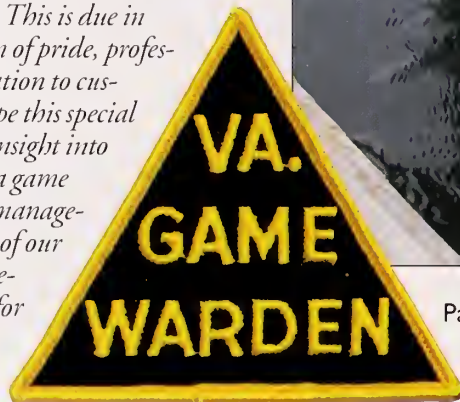
1948

Resource management is the regulation of human activity regarding the use of renewable resources such as fish and game. Wildlife and boating law enforcement are a public and resource management function of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The future of the Department and the Law Enforcement Division depends upon our ability to work with the sportsmen and citizens to identify and solve problems. Wildlife and sociological problems related to these resources are of equal importance. It is only with this understanding that law enforcement can be truly effective and efficient.

Game wardens in Virginia have been recognized for their efforts in providing superior education and law enforcement services. This is due in part to their tradition of pride, professionalism and dedication to customer service. We hope this special section will provide insight into the role your Virginia game warden plays in the management and protection of our public and wildlife resources. I am asking for your assistance and support. Remember, it is everyone's responsibility to protect our wildlife resources.

Thank you for your help.

—Colonel Jeffrey Uerz
Chief of Law Enforcement



Patch 1938-1962



Nearly 80 years have passed since the first wardens carried their badges into Virginia's woodlands. With each passing year the professionalism of Virginia's game wardens has increased. In recent years, new equipment and technology have been added to the warden's arsenal.

I remember when game wardens first were issued radios. In New Jersey, where I was working at the time as a deputy, we suspiciously regarded the omnipresent green light on the radio as the unblinking eye of the chief of law



Punt gun



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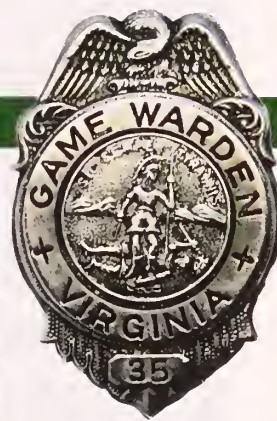
Preceding page, right: Working from boats and with boaters is a vital part of the game warden's job. Over 28,000 hours of the Law Enforcement Division's time is spent in this activity each year. Approximately 30,000 boaters are checked by wardens each year. Above: Game wardens are provided with the most modern equipment available, including laptop computers and alcohol sensors.



1948



1960s



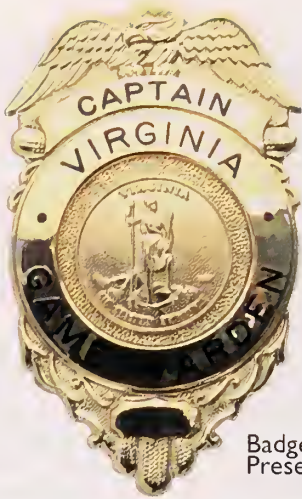
Badge
1940s

enforcement. But before long, we began to appreciate the many benefits of modern communication.

Now, wardens are better equipped than ever. In the past two years the Law Enforcement Division has received 172 laptop computers, one for everyone operating in the field. It has also added 172 alka-sensors, a preliminary field screening tool for boating under the influence, night vision equipment for catching poachers, 172 35-millimeter cameras for documenting evidence, some new all terrain vehicles and several boats that dramatically en-

"We're proud of today's game wardens—they're better equipped and better trained than ever. We are prepared to look to the future with confidence."

—William L. Woodfin, Jr,
Director



Badge
Present day



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"An important aspect of the job is the ability to be able to adapt to the changes in wildlife law enforcement as we enter the next century. As our duties continue to grow we must work to improve our service to the people of the Commonwealth."

—Sgt. Michael Caison, Northampton County

hance law enforcement on Virginia waters, including this year's additions of ten 19-foot and two 17-foot Boston Whalers, three 18-foot McKee Outboards, one 18-foot inboard/outboard, and several Zodiacs and jet skis.

Today's warden is also highly trained. Besides receiving the training required of most law enforcement officers, the warden is also educated in Virginia's wildlife. Wardens must learn to



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Far left: The warden force operates a wide variety of boats in an effort to keep our waterways safe and to take them to the often remote parts of lakes and rivers that are frequented by anglers. Game warden boats range from canoes and rubber rafts used on smaller waters to a 550 horsepower cruiser found on Chesapeake Bay. Training in firearms, self defense, and handling inebriated boaters are just a few of the classes. In many cases these classes are held by wardens specially trained in a particular discipline.

Training is constant for a game warden. (Left & below) Here wardens learn to investigate hunting accidents in a recent class held in Lynchburg.

survive on Virginia's waters and in the great expanses of the Commonwealth's mountains and woodlands. Wardens attend special classes that provide continuing education, to continually learn new techniques in wildlife law enforcement. The result is a professional who is prepared to meet the chal-

lenges of law enforcement, on the streets or in the wild.

Enforcing the laws regulating the Commonwealth's fisheries has changed considerably over the years. At one time a major effort of the law enforcement division was to patrol put and take trout streams in the late winter between the time

they were stocked until the trout season opened. Now, with the year round trout season, these patrols have been redirected to special regulation streams and boating law enforcement. However, wardens continue to enforce daily creel limits to ensure that anglers are conforming to any special regulations in effect.

Along with trout streams, there are hundreds of miles of small-mouth bass streams that must be patrolled, either on foot or by canoe. These patrols help ensure compliance with Virginia's wildlife laws and regulations.

In the spring, the presence of wardens is demanded on the brackish and freshwater reaches of the tidal rivers. American shad are protected, and it bears mentioning that many people refer to river herring as shad, and anyone fishing in the spring better know the difference, because the warden does and he might want to check your catch. The shad are the beneficiaries of a total moratorium, so you shouldn't have them in your possession. Wardens are required to inspect angler's creels to ensure compliance with a variety of size and creel limits protecting several freshwater species.

Wardens must also be on the alert for illegal netting and sale of various species. Recently, in neighboring Maryland, several violators were convicted of illegally netting thousands of largemouth black bass from the Potomac River and selling them alive in several states and in Canada. Only constant vigilance on the part of sportsmen and law enforcement personnel prevents similar illegal ventures in our state.

Boating safety is also a top priority for game wardens. Every year the number of boats registered in Virginia increases by the thousands, resulting in more crowded waters to be shared by recreational boaters and anglers. It has been determined that the mere presence of Game Department law enforcement boats on the water contributes significantly to boating safety. A vigorous campaign of inspecting vessels for operational safety equipment has played an important role in assuring that boaters have the proper equipment available for emergencies when they occur.



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Above: Personal watercraft numbers are increasing dramatically and wardens are striving to help operators of these "boats" to ride safely.

Right & far right: Wardens often engage in conversation about hunting and fishing with the sportsmen that they encounter in the field.



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"Being a game warden is not a typical "9 to 5" job. It is a lifestyle. It is a dynamic job where I am allowed to have a hand in my daily work schedule."

—Steven Garvis, Northampton County



Upper left: "Off-road" equipment is now used by game wardens to allow them to operate efficiently in remote areas.

Middle left: Wardens must check a boater's registration as well as his safety equipment.

Above: All deer, bear and turkeys taken in Virginia must be tagged and checked at a check station. These check stations work closely with the Department's warden force.

These education efforts are important, because game wardens perform their essential duties when the general public is on the water enjoying the thrill or relaxation of boating after a week of hard work. They do their best to make their inspections as unintrusive as possible, yet, at the

same time, they must be constantly alert for boat operators who are consuming alcoholic beverages while operating a watercraft. More than anyone else, the game warden who investigates major boating accidents knows the consequences of drinking and boating. Anyone who violates

laws associated with operating watercraft while under the influence must be prepared to suffer the severe consequences associated with such acts.

Checking boaters for valid boat registrations and, where applicable, fishing licenses is also part of the

Top right: Checking for proper deer tagging is an ongoing job during Virginia's 11 different deer hunting seasons.

Bottom right: Wardens often work with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in areas of overlapping jurisdiction.

Below: A warden assembling one of the decoy deer that are used to discourage road hunting.



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"Despite the ever constant dangers and challenges presented by trying to outsmart the poachers, this job is like no other. Your work area usually covers from several hundred to several thousand square miles. So the scenery is always changing. And the work changes with the season. You might be walking a mountain looking for illegal bait or patrolling a lake on a 21-foot patrol boat one day and teaching a hunter education course or sitting under the stars watching some desolate field for spotlights the next."

—Sgt. Mike Ashworth, Hunter Education Training



Left and middle: A spent rifle cartridge or the path of a bullet through the woods can be clues in solving a wildlife-related crime.

Below: Wardens often assist wildlife by getting injured animals to rehabilitation facilities.



warden's job. He is also very much on the alert for persons who handle their watercraft in a reckless manner.

While we usually envision the game warden enforcing boating laws on the great reservoirs, rivers and bays in the Commonwealth, they will also be found in canoes and their new Zodiacs, wending their way on the smaller watercourses.

Often these patrols are at night as they search for overdue canoeists reported missing by their families.

Search and rescue missions are among the most disagreeable jobs wardens perform. They can be required any time of year, in any weather. Such missions have placed wardens at risk in howling winter gales on Back Bay or in thick fogs on

the James River. Being the law enforcement officers who best know the backwoods or off-trail areas of the state they are frequently called upon to participate in searches for missing persons.

Enforcement of the hunting laws brings Virginia's game wardens into the marshes and waters of the Chesapeake Bay, to the thick pine woods of Tidewater to the highest peaks of the Appalachians. In the earliest years of enforcing Virginia's game laws, wardens faced the illegal market hunting of waterfowl on the Eastern Shore. They pursued poachers who continued to supply an illegal market for waterfowl to Great Britain, even after a treaty was finalized and waterfowling was placed under federal control and commercial waterfowl hunting was outlawed. The giant punt guns and batteries, once tools of the illegal waterfowl trade are now treasured trophies of the Game Department. Once these huge guns disappeared, poachers continued to engage in a battle of wits with wardens as they continued illegally taking ducks for the market by means of trapping.

In the late 20s the white-tailed deer was a curiosity in Virginia and in the early 30s a program to restock Virginia with deer was undertaken. During the meat-starved days of the Great Depression a newly released deer appeared as manna from heaven to some. Only a vigilant game warden and a few sympathetic members of the public protected the deer. Former Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries Director Dick Cross said that law enforcement played a role in the comeback of the deer herd. The marvelous comeback of the deer herd must be attributed to management, restocking and enforcement of Virginia's game laws. As Cross himself told me, "without effective law enforcement, it would have been impossible" for Virginia to restore its deer herd.

Despite the ease with which a legal hunter can claim a deer these days, there are still those who persist in illegally taking deer at night.



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Night patrols to catch poachers demand many hours of a warden's time.

The illegal sale of bear parts also poses another challenge for Virginia's wardens. Illegal taking of big game, such as bears, reflects poorly on the majority of legal hunters who are ethical and who support the best resource management practices.

During the winter, as snow blankets the earth, each warden must make a determination if there is sufficient snow on the ground to warrant closing the quail season. If he deems the season to be closed he must notify the local sheriffs department and other key individuals in his county. He must also be prepared to receive dozens of phone calls and to patiently explain to each caller his reasons for closing (or not closing) the season.

Of all of the game warden's tasks, the most unpleasant is dealing with and investigating hunting and boating accidents. In nearly all cases the accidents were preventable and the victims are nearly always younger persons with many years before them. It is because of their experience in dealing with carelessness in the field or afloat that game wardens place such emphasis upon hunting and boating education in the field as



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well as in the classroom. If you are ever stopped by a game warden for a safety violation and if he appears to be somewhat stern as he writes your citation—remember—all too often he has seen the results of such carelessness and he'd much rather write you a ticket now than write an accident report about you later.

Wardens have another responsibility that will not be found in their job descriptions. They are expected to know everything there is to know about hunting and fishing and fish and wildlife. They are supposed to know where and when and how to catch the best fish, the biggest deer or the most ducks. Acting as a role



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***This page:** Hunter education, particularly working with children, is an important part of the Law Enforcement Division's efforts. Much of this work culminates in the annual Hunter Education Championships held at Holliday Lake near Appomattox. **Preceding page:** A crucial element of a successful game warden's job is cooperation with other law enforcement agencies. Wardens regularly work with local sheriffs, state police and a variety of federal organizations involved in law enforcement.*

model to Virginia's young sportsmen is probably the most important job a warden has—at least in the young eyes who believe in him the most. □

Jack Randolph is an outdoor writer based in Colonial Heights.

"I enjoy working outdoors, interacting with the public, educating citizens on game and fish laws and the intent of such laws, especially children and young adults, teaching them not only safety and respect for the law, but respect for nature as well. And I take pride in my responsibility to enforce the laws of the Commonwealth."

—Mark B. DiLuigi, Prince William County



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Smallmouth Streamer

by Harry Murray

All smallmouths feed heavily upon minnows. And these are what we are attempting to mimic with our streamers. Whether we tie them with feathers, bucktail, leather or synthetics, we hope the bass perceive them as minnows.

When selecting our fly patterns, it is important that not only do they look like the specific minnows we plan to imitate but we must also be able to make them act like the real minnows.

The next logical extrapolation of this "minnow-matching" approach is that we know when, where, and how to fish the various streamers.

In order to achieve this let's start late in the spring, just as the bass are thawing out from winter, and trace our ways through the summer and fall, until, again, when the cold water of late fall reduces the bass's needs for food.

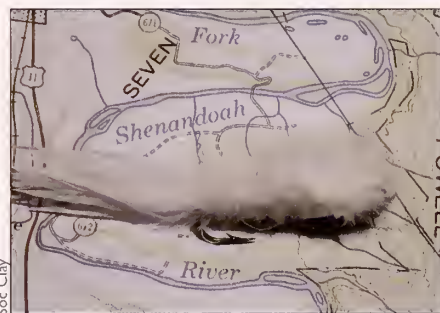
The tactics I use for late spring smallmouth streamer fishing are influenced primarily by two factors. The water is still cool and because of only moderate metabolic needs for food the bass are not willing to move great distances to capture even the real minnows much less my flies. The second controlling factor is the water level. At this time of the year our streams are frequently running quite full. This means we must either select protected feeding areas to ply our flies or we must punch them through the strong currents to the fish-protecting crevices and boulders along the stream bottom.

As you can see, springtime is not the season for "chuck-it-and-chance-it."

On the contrary, I make my best catches by carefully reading the water to select these protected areas and by properly posi-

tioning myself in order that my flies may pierce through the bulldogging currents. Admittedly, I frequent some old reliable haunts which have produced well over the years, and, in so doing, I have learned which similar looking new areas might be productive.

For example, I learned the value of, and the technique for, fishing small protected side eddies in a stretch I long ago named the "Third Tree Hole" on the North Fork of the Shenandoah River close to Edinburg, Virginia. (I know the name lacks the poetic ring of the pools on the Beaverkill, falling more into the monotonic pitch of those on the Madison which Charlie Brooks



Choosing streamer flies for an assault on a smallmouth bass stream. (Above) Shenk's White Streamer, (inset) Shenk's Sculpin.

named after the milepost.) This area is no larger than a dinner table and actually cuts back into the bank only about two feet, making it difficult for me to locate until I get close—that's why I had to mark it by the tree. The main currents race by just a few feet from my hot spot necessitating a close approach and tough wading. However, the reward is worth the effort, for I cannot remember this protected area ever failing to produce a large bass for me early in the season. And sometimes it yields several nice fish. The game calls for wading to within 30 feet of the eddy, shooting a weighted size 4 Shenk's Sculpin tight against the bank, and, while holding the rod tip high to bridge the intervening currents, slowly stripping the streamer across the eddy. Normally it gets nailed before I move it five feet. To put these impressive results in prospective, I must tell you that usually I fish my

Tactics

way all across the 200 foot wide racing river to get to this eddy and seldom get a strike out there.

These protected side pockets are found all along our rivers, but in

particularly attractive boulder-strun section of the river, saying it reminded him of scenes in the wonderful movie "A River Runs Through It." He waded in below

tightly enough to negate the strong currents on the outer parameters of the hot spot. These pockets can seldom be fished from above in periods of high water, even if one has a fast



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order to reap their rewards one must first identify them and next approach them in a manner that allows us to manipulate our flies in a natural manner.

A close kin to these bank-eddies are the protected areas in midstream shielded by protruding upstream boulders or ledges. These holes may be as small as a card table or as large as an automobile, obviously with the larger areas having the potential for holding the most fish. This became very apparent in one of my recent smallmouth fly fishing schools, as one student was attracted to a

and slightly to the side of a boulder which was protecting an area about ten feet wide and five feet deep immediately downstream of it. Although the shunted currents raced by on both sides of the boulder, the gentle swirls below it were a haven for the bass. By casting a size 4 Black Murray's Strymph up below the boulder and stripping it slowly back along the stream bottom, this fellow took one nice fish after another, pumping his ego up to an indecent level.

The secret here? Identify the pockets accurately and move in

sinking tip fly line.

Speaking of which, there are sections of the river where one can do well early in the season with a fast sinking tip fly line such as Scientific Anglers Sink Tip III. One such section which has been kind to me wherever I find it is where the main riffle entering a pool traces along a protected bank. Although the main flow may be galloping on at a fast pace, this very edge, where the fast current brushes the slow protected current, is where the bass lie. These rubble bottoms are also loaded with sculpin minnows. I like to fish these

fast-slow water interfaces down and across stream with a fast sinking tip line using a streamer such as Shenk's Sculpin or Whitlock's Sculpin. I cannot stress strongly



Above: Casting a streamer into a shaded grassy area might just yield a big smallmouth. Right: Waterman's Silver.

enough how much better your catch will be here if you "swim your streamer" across these brushing currents, as opposed to just dangling it downstream. The productive channel here may be as much as 20 feet wide and pinpointing the bass'es location is difficult. Thus, searching the streamer across the flow will greatly multiply your catch, especially on larger fish.

As the season turns the corner into summer our rivers begin drop-

ping and although many of the sections and tactics we used earlier are still productive, we can now fish many other parts of the rivers successfully.

The waters in mid-river, just below the riffles, which carried too much water earlier now yield good action to the same Sculpin patterns just mentioned when fished down and across stream in a searching manner. One now needs to choose between the sinking tip line and the floating line for this type fishing; personally, I find that by mid-June I can switch over to a floating line and with a nine foot leader tapered down to 2X take bass consistently in these heads of the pools.

Other areas—and some of my favorites early in the summer—are the tails of the pools. If a pool is so composed that the last hundred feet or so feathers out to water a foot deep before dropping into the next riffle, one can expect an abundance of minnows here.

Since large smallmouths do not like to hold in real bright sunlight for extended periods of time, we would logically look to these areas early in the morning, late in the evening and on heavily overcast days. Last summer I took a friend who wasn't familiar with smallmouth streamer fishing into one of the long pool tails just as the sun began dropping below the riverside trees. He was instantly sold on this type fishing as we worked size 6 Waterman's Silver Outcast streamers down and across stream and retrieved them with a slow stripping action. He suspected he had quickly become a master smallmouth angler and as the sun dropped lower and lower, prompting the fish to feed more aggressively he was truly astounded with his success.

By midsummer the receding water level, the warming water temperatures and the intensely bright days produce physical changes in the bass'es environment which prompt subtle changes in his feeding habits.

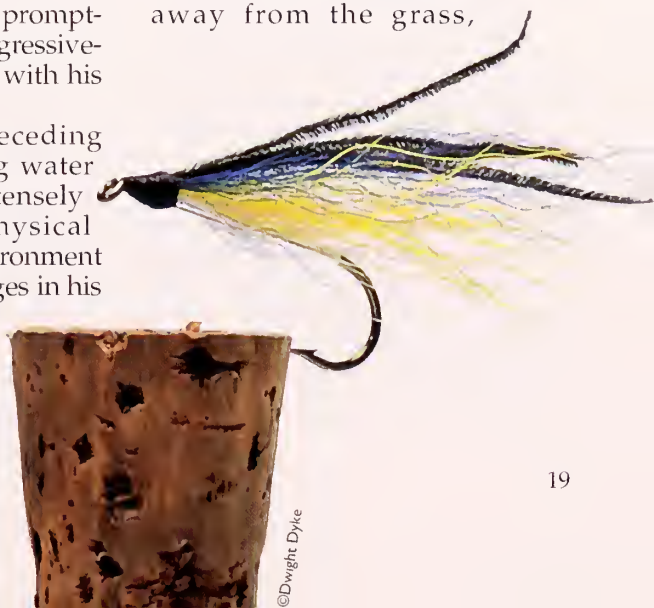
I really like to work on the aquatic grass beds that are now well developed.

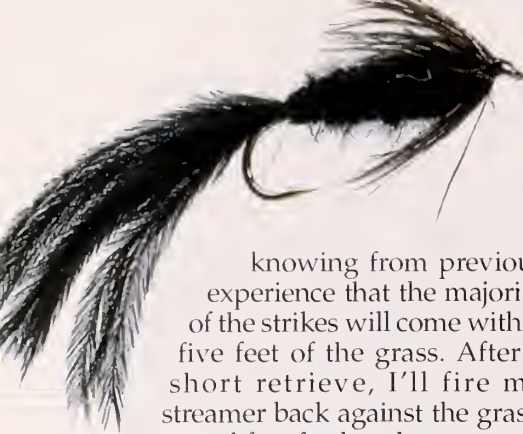
These beds abound with shiner minnows and the bass know it.

The easiest and frequently the most productive grass beds to fish are those which stab skyward from the outcropping ledges in mid-stream. Frequently these ledges will meander back and forth across our rivers exposing themselves along the stream surface while three feet downstream plummeting to perfect bass-holding water five feet deep. In essence what we have here is the bedroom immediately beside the dining room—see why I'm lured to these areas.

My favorite way to fish these midstream grass beds is to wade around the perimeter, about 50 feet out, casting my Silver Outcast Streamer in close to the grass, retrieving it slowly out at right angles to the grass. I find that I get most of my strikes close to the grass so I'm in no hurry to get the fly into open water.

Some sections of our rivers have more of a freestone bottom composition as opposed to ledges. Aquatic grass beds often grow along these banks for hundreds of feet, reaching out into the rivers for 20 feet. One such area on the Potomac River has been so kind to me that I find myself passing up all of the rest of the river until I have thoroughly covered it. Here I like to wade downstream parallel to the grassbeds about 50 feet out and cast my streamers down and across stream, tight against the grass. I get tight to the fly quickly, for often the strike comes within the first several seconds. I use a very slow stripping action as I fish the Silver Outcast Streamer out away from the grass,





knowing from previous experience that the majority of the strikes will come within five feet of the grass. After a short retrieve, I'll fire my streamer back against the grass, several feet further downstream, and continue this methodical pattern until I have covered the whole grass bed.

If late summer yields very low water levels prompting the bass to be exceedingly wary I revert to a tactic revealed by the late master angler, Ray Bergman in his fine book *Fresh Water Bass* published over 50 years ago.

It goes like this. At daylight in the mornings, while the river is still cool from the night air, many bass feed aggressively in the tails of the pools and in the shallows along the banks. The wariness of these bass prompts an approach from downstream with exceptionally careful wading. Using a greased head White Marabou Muddler, I cast up and across stream, taking care not to "line the fish" I plan to show my fly to. I use a very slow hand-strip retrieve in which I pull the streamer just below the surface for about six inches, then pause to let it bob back to the surface and drift naturally for a foot or two before gently dunking it again. This action effectively mimics the feeble swimming efforts of a dying minnow. And the bass, lured by the appeal of an easy meal, crash the streamers with amazing regularity.

This tactic is effective until the sun gets slightly above the horizon, prompting the smallmouths to vacate the exposed flats. However, the shaded side of the river may continue to fish well for another hour or so. The main aspect to keep in mind in this type of shallow water streamer fishing is to use a very careful approach; that is, wade slowly to prevent sending out telltale little waves, don't false cast over the spot you plan to drop your fly and make gen-

tle presentations. This last one is up to you, but I find that if the water is exceptionally low and clear I make better catches in the shallows by lengthening my leader out to about 12 feet.

Early fall fishes much like late summer, but once the water temperatures begin dropping rapidly in late September the bass relocate to the deeper pockets and pools. They are definitely still catchable and frequently I make some of my best catches, especially for large fish, at this time of the year.

Many of these holding areas are from five to seven feet deep and with the slower currents normally found at this time of the year we can effectively fish them with flies. I

crawl my streamer along the stream bottom. Attention: if you nail one large bass, finely tune your reflexes because you may get into quite a few more fish close by. Also, remember this spot next week and next year, for more than likely the bass will be right there. No, this is not cheating; you're probably going to release them all anyway.

As you can see, streamer smallmouth fishing can be pretty much what you want to make it. By evaluating your water and adapting your tactic and fly patterns to the specific areas, you can expect great action all season. □

Harry Murray is a freelance writer who teaches fishing and fly tying in Edinburg, Virginia.

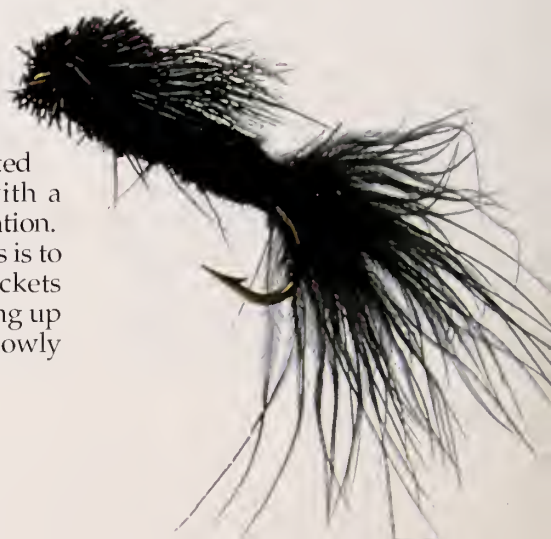


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have found that streamers that can be fished deeply and very slowly and still produce an effective line-minnow action give me my largest fish under these conditions. The two most effective patterns I've found are Shenk's White Streamer and Murray's Cream Strymph; the soft furs, marabou and ostrich herl with which these flies are constructed come to life convincingly with a minimum amount of manipulation.

My best ploy for the fall bass is to approach the deep pools, pockets and cuts from below and casting up or up and across stream and slowly

Choosing a Whitlock's Sculpin. Top left: Murray's Black Strymph, (below) Shenk's Sculpin.



Virginia's Little Brown Birds

Story and Illustrations
by Spike Knuth

You've probably seen them frequently. You may not have known what they were; those nervous, little brown birds, with slender, slightly down-curved bills. You noticed too, how they held their short, stubby tails in a cocked up position. These little feathered balls of energy are of the family *troglodytidae*, meaning "cave-dwellers," in reference to their habit of nesting in cozy little cavities, crevices of rocks, boxes, in the nooks and crannies of man-made wooden structures, where they build rounded or dome-shaped nests.

Virginia has six common species, five that nest in the Commonwealth and often stay year round during mild winters, and one that winters here but breeds in the north, including the Canadian wilderness.

Marsh Wren

The sexes of the wrens are alike in color, showing only shades of browns, grays, buffs, rufous, sooty and white, marked only with streaks, bars and speckles. They have a few tiny whiskers at the base of their bills, somewhat like warblers and flycatchers. Their wings are small and rounded.

House Wren

Troglodytidae (cave-dweller)
aedon (nightingale):

The house wren is common in residential areas with plenty of trees and shrubs. It measures about 5 inches long. Many of us grew up knowing this bird as "Jenny Wren." It's also called the common wren or brown wren. Upon arrival in spring it tends to first show up in the woodlands

where it gathers with others of its kind in a like manner come their fall migration. Here you can hear its choppy gurgling or warbling calls, repeated over and over again. In some cases the house wren stays to nest in the woods. The loblolly forests of Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge is one place that has good numbers of this tattle bird.

While many nest in cavities in the woods, it takes readily to man-made housing. House wrens are pugnacious and will defend their territory vigorously. Once his boundaries are established, the little male sings incessantly, letting the world and other house wrens know it. He may begin filling a suitable nest cavity or house with twigs, only to have the female remove most of them and rebuild with twigs and grasses of her choice.

House wrens will nest in old tin cans, hats or dish pans left laying around, and commonly use old woodpecker holes. Actually, house wrens may have as many as three broods annually. They feed almost exclusively on insects.

Carolina Wren

Thryothorus ("reed-jumping") *ludovicianus* ("of Louisiana")

The Carolina wren is larger than the house wren, measuring 5 to 6 inches long. When it flies, it covers short distances with quick, whirring wing beats. Its call is a three syllabled "tea-kettle, tea-kettle, tea-kettle," which it sings throughout the year, although infrequently in winter. When it sings its whole



Bewick's Wren

body quivers and shakes as it puts its all into it. It is known in some areas as the mocking wren or Louisiana wren.

These wrens inhabit moist woodlands, swamp thickets, even coastal marshes where the loblolly pines stand close to water along with tangles of greenbriar. Find a brush pile and you are apt to find a Carolina wren. Look for them also around wooden bridges, or other small wooden structures, stumps or dead-falls. They'll commonly live around sheds and woodpiles in residential areas.

Carolina wrens nest among up-turned roots of fallen trees, brush heaps, tree cavities and wooden structures. They'll choose any number of other unusual places including park charcoal grills left unattended for a few weeks into the nesting season, carpenter apron pockets if you leave them laying around, coffee cans, clothespin bags, light fixtures, and on one occasion, one nested in the windshield wiper well of an automobile that was in use, and brought off a brood once discovered by the owner!

They feed mainly on insects on or close to the ground. They are one of the first birds awake and singing in the morning, and they seem to be es-



House Wren

pecially active before sunup and at dusk. Carolina wrens are non-migratory, staying with us all year. In winter, they'll commonly come to the area below a bird feeder about sun down to get tiny seeds or seed scraps left by other birds.

Bewick's Wren

Thryomanes ("reed-seeking") *bewicki*
(Bewick-English ornithologist)

The Bewick's wren, is among the state's rare and uncommon species. While they never were numerous, the eastern range of the Bewick's wren has declined even more in recent years. It is still common in the Midwest and southern portion of the western United States. It is about 5 ½ inches long, and resembles the Carolina wren, except it has a longer, white-edged tail with black spots, which it jerks sideways when perched. Its call is similar to the song and field sparrows.

It too, is a bird of the brush piles, fencerows with old rail fences, stone fences, rock piles and sparser areas dotted with hawthorne or multiflora rose, plants more tolerant of the cooler high country. It will nest in old woodpecker holes and cavities of almost any kind, around old wooden outbuildings, in cans or other similar containers. For the best chance to see a Bewick's wren, Curtis S. Adkisson, writing in *Virginia's Endangered Species*, said that Highland, Dickenson, Wise, Tazewell and Grayson counties are the places to look for them.

Marsh Wren

Telmatoodytes ("swamp-dwelling")
palustris ("pertaining to marsh")

The marsh wren lives in freshwater and coastal marshes. It's a small bird, measuring about 4 ½ to 5 ½ inches long. The best field marks are the white streaks on a dark brown back, a white eye stripe and a dark cap. It is also known as reed wren or cattail wren, and was formerly known as the long-billed marsh wren.

It is especially fond of cattail marshes or near marshy-edged streams, and salt or brackish marshes and ponds. During courtship and



Winter Wren

at the beginning of nesting, the marsh wren commonly "sings" at night when the moon is full or nearly full. The "song" is not the most musical, sounding more like scratchy insect-like sounds, with an occasional musical note included.

The marsh wren builds a globular-shaped nest of reeds, cattails, grasses and down, which is hung amid and connected to emergent marsh vegetation such as reeds, cat-

tails and bullrushes. It has the unusual habit of building extra, "dummy" nests, probably for extra shelter or to confuse predators as to which nest is in use. This bold tattle bird goes around perforating the eggs of herons and bitterns nesting close by to eliminate the potential for predation on their own eggs and young. During milder winters, it may stay in Virginia along the coast all year round.



Sedge Wren

Sedge Wren
Cistothorus ("shrub-jumper")
stellaris ("starry")

The sedge wren inhabits the drier, brushier grass marshes. It was formerly known as the short-billed marsh wren, and is also called the meadow wren or grass wren. It has a streaked crown, no significant eye stripe and buffy underside.

It measures 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ to 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, and utters a "chap, chap, chap" call with a rolling "r" sound on the end. It sings from the grasses, bushes or wildflowers and tall plants. It tends to creep or crawl through the thick vegetation and it is difficult to get a good look at. The sedge wren builds a round nest much like the marsh wren but of finer grasses, close to the ground. It will build extra nests as well, and like the marsh wren, nests in small colonies of five or six pair.

Winter Wren
Troglodytes ("cave-dweller")
hiemalis ("winter")

The winter wren breeds in the northern United States, and in Canadian swamps and woodlands, but it spends the winter in Virginia. A tiny bird, it measures 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and is the smallest of our wrens. Among its other names are mouse wren, wood wren, short-tailed wren or spruce wren.

A dark brown little bird, it has a the habit of bobbing its head and cocking its stubby little tail over its back, pointing almost forward. It stays near the ground creeping mouse-like through tangles of grapevines or greenbrier, deadfalls, stumps, logs, and brush piles.

The mountains of Virginia with many ice and snow-damaged trees that have fallen over provide excellent habitat for winter wrens, as do the southeastern woodlands of oak, holly, and greenbrier around Tidewater.

All the wrens are incessant songsters and when alarmed or disturbed, they utter loud, harsh, scolding calls. Wrens usually have two

broods, sometimes three, each year. Their food is almost exclusively insects, insect eggs or larvae, although those that spend the winter will subsist on tiny weed seeds and wild berries. Without a doubt, one of the

more interesting of our birds are the little brown birds—the wrens. □

Spike Knuth is a wildlife artist and information officer with the Virginia Game Department.



Carolina Wren



Willie Ransone talks about the old days with Lt. Dennis Mullins.

"Been There, Seen That, Done It"

Since 1937 Willie Ransone has worked hard to serve the folks of Botetourt County. As owner and operator of Ransone's Drug Store located in the heart of downtown Buchanan, Willie has been a friend to those needing medicine, groceries, or a cold root beer float from the soda fountain, and for the better part of 60 years, the only store in Botetourt County where sportsmen could go to buy a hunting or fishing license.

At 86, Willie has decided that it's time to slow down a bit and is closing the doors to his drugstore. An area landmark to many, Willie's place has reflected the heartbeat of this small rural town located along the banks of the upper James River. For decades, the drugstore has been the local headquarters for all who love to hunt and fish throughout this part of the state.

Botetourt County has long been known for its great hunting and fishing. For as long as Willie can remember, sportsmen have gathered here

to tell tales of the big ones that got away down by the river or about the buck that seems always to elude a handful of hunters every year. Willie remembers what really put the county on the map was the Game Department's decision to stock big game. "I can even remember when the Game Department started to stock deer in the county back in the early 40s. They would bring them in by train and stop here in town for people to look at before letting them go up near the little village of Arcadia."

When asked how many licenses he had sold over the years, Willie looked up with a wide grin and replied, "A whole lot of them. I can remember back to when I first sold them, I think they were around 50 cents." Like many of the dedicated people who have served sportsmen throughout the state by selling hunting and fishing licenses, Willie Ransone never did it for the money, but rather for the chance to help people. Willie was quick to add that over the years he has learned that there are no better folks to get to know than those who love the outdoors. □

Hunter Education Championship Results

Over 135 hunter education graduates converged on Appomattox to participate in the 1995 Virginia Youth Hunter Education Championships at Holliday Lake 4-H Center this year. Sponsored by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, volunteer hunter education instructors, 4-H leaders, game wardens and Game Department employees set up and run events in hunter responsibility and wildlife identification, archery, rifle, shotgun and outdoor skills.

The championship is open to all hunter education graduates meeting the championship requirements and age groups. Age groups consist of Junior (age 12-14) and Senior (15-19).

This year's top hunters are:

Senior Team

First Place: Scott County
Barry Compton, Mark Dorton, Timothy Moore, Jonathan Puckett, and Ezekiel Quillen. Coach: Jack Van Zant

Second Place: Lunenburg/Nottoway/ Brunswick counties
Frankie Johnson, Edwin Foster, Andy Austin, Will Springston, Robbie Bolling, and Robert Hayes. Coach: Willard Anderson

Third Place: Augusta County
Michael Burnett, William Arbogast, Michael Arbogast, Timothy Rankin, and Jared Hemp. Coaches: William Painter and Thomas Rankin

Junior Team

First Place: Culpeper County
Russell Haynie, Taylor Haynie, Casey Taylor and Jason Miller. Coaches: Charles Marsh, Richard Haynie, and Curtis Hale

Second Place: Powhatan County
Sarah Daniels, Diana Daniels, Mary Daniels, Jason Barham, Karl Church, and Joshua Braswell. Coaches:



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Deanna Coffey and Tammy Daniels
Third Place: Shenandoah County
 Chad Sherman, Jared Williams,
 Wesley Mumaw, Justin Grubb,
 Arron Bushman and Greg Neal.
 Coaches: George Mason and Eddie
 Mason.

Individual/Seniors

First Place: Jonathan Puckett, Scott
 County

Second Place: Steven Humphreys,
 Powhatan County

Third Place: Edwin Foster, Lunen-
 burg County

Individual/Juniors

First Place: Russell Haynie, Culpeper
 County

Second Place: Jason Miller, Culpeper
 County

Third Place: Sarah Daniels,
 Powhatan County □

New Observation Tower and Other Activities at Dick Cross WMA

The Dick Cross Wildlife Manage-
 ment Area in Mecklenburg County
 has a new wildlife observation
 tower overlooking Clyde's Pond, a
 large, elongated, shallow-water im-
 poundment managed for waterfowl

and shorebirds. Located in a wood-
 ed bluff overlooking what is actually
 a part of the Staunton (Roanoke)
 River flood plain below Kerr Dam,
 the tower construction was a coop-
 erative effort of the Mecklenburg
 Electric Cooperative, Landmark
 Volunteers and the Department of
 Game and Inland Fisheries. The 12 X
 12-foot tower platform is perched
 more than 15 feet above the ground,
 and is handicapped-accessible via a
 70-foot long ramp.

"When we were trying to design
 this tower to ensure it was both
 handicapped-accessible and was
 high enough off the ground to pro-
 vide a good view of the wetlands,
 we weren't sure how to go about it at
 first," said Wildlife Biologist Assis-
 tant, Danny Johnson of Clarksville,
 who manages the Dick Cross WMA.
 General Manager and Vice Presi-
 dent of Mecklenburg Electric Coop-
 erative, John Bowman,, responded
 by making eight 35-foot tall utility
 poles available to the Department.
 "Not only did we get the poles deliv-
 ered to the construction site," said
 Johnson, "but John also sent us a
 crew to set these poles!" Because of
 safety concerns and project design
 specifications, the poles had to be set
 up in a very precise way. "They liter-
 ally got us off the ground on this
 one," Johnson observed.

This past April, the tower was the
 object of special concern during Op-
 eration Spruce-Up. The Mecklen-
 burg County Extension 4-H Club
 cut underbrush, cleaned it away and
 spread mulch under the tower, as
 well as erecting about 10 bluebird
 houses. In addition, 6 members of
 the Association of Virginia Field
 Trial Clubs contributed the better
 part of a Saturday to plant trees at
 the tower and to replace 45 posts
 around the adjacent parking area.

Clyde's Pond, which the tower
 overlooks, is a 60-acre impound-
 ment with water level controls. For a
 number of years its levels were ma-
 nipulated by drawing it down and
 planting it to millet in summer, then
 flooding it in fall and winter so the
 ripe millet seed could provide food
 for waterfowl. For many years, the
 area was used for trapping and

banding waterfowl. This year John-
 son said the pond is going to be
 drawn down but allowed to grow
 up in natural vegetation, such as
 smartweed and other natural food
 plants. The ponds will be allowed to
 fill with water in fall and the many
 weed seeds will provide important
 waterfowl food through the winter.

Another impoundment on the
 area is only a couple of years old.
 Known simply as "the lower im-
 poundment," it was formed on an
 old drainage ditch which was diked.
 A slash board-type water control
 system was constructed to form a 35
 acre, shallow, bowl-like impound-
 ment adjacent to the mouth of Al-
 lens Creek. Johnson said that the
 area around it was then planted to
 pin oaks, willow oaks and red oaks,
 with another 12 acres left open for
 wheat and corn.



Splice Knuth

The oldest pond on the area,
 Hundley Pond, an impoundment
 built in the 50 s on Kettle Creek, is
 also being repaired. The dam on this
 30-acre pond broke apart some
 years ago and will also have slash
 board-type control structures con-
 structed on it. This impoundment
 will also be lowered to allow natural
 vegetation to grow, then allowed to
 fill up in fall and winter.

Yet another small impoundment
 to be built this year, is the Steel
 Bridge Impoundment, which is not
 attached to the Cross WMA, but will
 be managed as a part of it. This 2 or 3
 acre pond is adjacent to Lake Gaston
 and the Roanoke River and will be
 planted to a variety of oaks around
 it.

The Cross WMA is especially
 noted as a field trial facility for bird
 dogs, mainly pointers and setters.
 Occasionally, retriever trials are held

as well. The area contains modern kennels with concrete floors and chain link fences, with running water. Johnson said that 9 to 12 field trials are held annually on the area.

The area is also popular for its dove hunting. Johnson estimates that about 150-200 hunters visit the dove fields on opening day, which are planted to mainly wheat, corn, millet and sunflowers. Numerous other fields are planted to corn, and shufa is planted for the benefit of wild turkeys.

Prescribed burns are conducted from January through March to provide early successional habitat which benefits quail, rabbits and songbirds. The area also has many deer. In addition to wood duck nesting boxes and bluebird houses, nesting boxes have been erected for barn owls.

Overall, the Cross Wildlife Management Area consists of some 1,400 acres of mostly open, farm-like land. Much of the area was once part of a cattle and dairy farm. It is located near Boydton, and can be reached by taking I-85 to South Hill, then Route 58 west to Route 4. Turn left and go about two miles to the Cross WMA entrance on the left. □

Game Department Receives Public Relations Award

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries was presented a Medallion Award at the 49th Annual Virginia Public Relations Awards Ceremony held at the Marriott Hotel in Richmond on May 29.

The Richmond Public Relations Association Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America gave this first place award in the Special Projects category to the Department for its video production *Odyssey on the James River*. The video was made last summer and shown on PBS stations throughout Virginia in May.

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) and the Virginia Wildlife Federation joined forces to document the impact of industry, recreation and development along Virginia's most important waterway—the James River. During the summer of 1995, DGIF accompanied the Virginia Wildlife Federation and 20 Virginia high school students on a week-long trip down the James River.

One of the most historic and wild rivers in the east, the trip down the James River offered these students the opportunity to gain valuable on-site experience in natural resource management. The trip was coordinated by Tom Evans, President of the Virginia Wildlife Federation and Bill Hastings, a biology teacher at Thomas Dale High School in Chesterfield County. The students began their exploration of the river in Highland County at the headwaters of the James and followed the river to its end at the Chesapeake Bay. Along the way the students visited fisheries, hydroelectric stations, some paper mills, the Virginia General Assembly, a quarry, a tidal marsh, an oil recovery vessel and a nuclear power plant. The trip included talks from state officials, wildlife and fish biologists, marine scientists and other experts in resource management.

The video demonstrates how important the James River is for wildlife, recreation, industry and the environment. It also communicates to Virginians how positive resource management can be achieved through public/private partnerships. □



The Honorable Becky Norton Dunlop, Secretary of Natural Resources, and William L. Woodfin, Jr., Director of VDGIF, pitch in to help plant trees at the Chester Phelps Wildlife Management Area during Governor Allen's Operation Spruce-up campaign in April.

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Book Review

by Thomas Barnett

A Game Warden's Notes, by Sergeant Jon Ober

Ever wondered what being a game warden is like? Jon Ober reflects upon his illustrious career as a Virginia game warden with a behind-the-badge perspective. A

Game Warden's Notes is 120 pages of colorful, true adventure short stories featuring a variety of Gloucester County's creative yet less than brilliant game law violators.

As the episodes lengthen, intensity builds, particularly when a habitual offender is arrested in the middle of Guinea Marsh on New Year's Eve. Things take off to a murder investigation, and to every legitimate sportsman's nightmare—hard core

disrespect for wildlife, property, decency, and the law. Jon's honesty demonstrates excellent examples of multi-jurisdictional cooperation. The importance of our conservation officer's police powers, particularly in rural Virginia, is exemplified along with dashes of humor. Do you think that guy actually ate the turkey vulture for Thanksgiving dinner? □



The Virginia Department
of Game and Inland Fisheries'

Women in the Outdoors Program

presents

*an introductory workshop where
you can learn a variety of outdoor skills
and become acquainted with hunting,
fishing, and other outdoor pursuits.*

This workshop is for you if...

- ☐ you have never tried these activities but are looking for an opportunity to learn;
- ☐ you are familiar with a new outdoor activity but would like to try your hand at some new ones;
- ☐ you are looking for fun and camaraderie with other women, relief from the stress of work, and adventure in a non-threatening atmosphere.

Session topics include: introduction to firearms, survival skills, basic canoeing, enhancing wildlife habitat, using a map and compass, beginning fishing and hunting skills, birdwatching...and much more!

September 20-22, 1996

Holliday Lake 4-H,
Appomattox, VA

Contact Suzie Gilley, VDGIF, (804) 367-0188



Photo TipS

By Lynda Richardson

Artists have long known about the "WOW" of color and have used it to create visual effects in their art. Roman painters used color to indicate perspective. Renaissance artists played with warm and cool colors to emphasize form and shape. In the early 1800s, French impressionists began to explore color theories based on the harmony, contrast, and emotional effects of color. They had learned that color has power over the mind and eye of the viewer.

Color is one of the most powerful tools in visual communication. Everyday we are bombarded by images, signs and natural occurrences sneakily colored to elicit certain responses from us. For example, red is seen as a sign for danger, love, and fear. It is a color which subconsciously warms you up or warns you of danger. "Stop" signs are red. Valentine's Day hearts are red. Some animals wear red to warn predators that they are poisonous while others may use red to attract a mate.

Colors are organized into three categories; primary, secondary and complimentary. Primary colors are those which are considered the purest and visually strongest of the colors; red, yellow and blue. As you already know red is hot, passionate and dangerous. Yellow is seen as warm, friendly and an attention getter. Blue is considered cool, relaxing and inviting. Secondary colors are those made up of equal parts of the primary colors; orange (red and yellow), green (yellow and blue) and purple (red and blue). Complimentary colors are colors which, when seen together, create an overall pleasing look which "compliments" each of the colors involved. These color compliments are red-green, orange-blue and yellow-purple.

The WOW of Color

Color can also be arranged as to how they are felt by the viewer. Reds, yellows and oranges naturally are considered warm or hot. Blues, greens, and purples are viewed as cool or cold. Colors can even change their character when placed next to other colors. Red next to cooler blue tends to look more fiery but red placed near yellow seems to have a calming effect on both though the scene would still appear warm.

Another phenomenon of color is its ability to stand out or recede. Cool colors tend to recede while

catch your eye before that cool sea of green leaves surrounding them.

Now that you have a little background into how color works you should use this knowledge in your photography. Think like the painter who is preparing his/her canvas for a creation. Look carefully at a subject and its surroundings and decide how color will enhance or distract from what you are trying to photograph. Experiment with various color combinations. But most of all, have a good time enjoying photography and the colorful outdoors. □

"NEWS YOU CAN USE!"

Yours truly will be a *guest leader* for two up-coming trips to Antarctica sponsored by the National Wildlife Federation (NWF). Each trip will be an 11-night expedition voyage aboard a 36-passenger polar research vessel. I'll be there to help everyone photograph three species of penguins as well as seals, whales and the numerous seabirds living and nesting in this scenic region. The trips will be offered; December 16-30, 1996 and December 27, 1996-January 10, 1997. Please join me for this outstanding expedition. I know I'm excited! For more information call NWF Expeditions at 1-800-606-9563. See you there!



*Colorful blue crabs wait in a pile before becoming dinner. Though they are called blue crabs it's the red tips of their claws which command the most attention.
Photo by Lynda Richardson.*

warm colors stand out. Look at a field of wildflowers. The first thing you will notice in a field of blue bachelor buttons, white and yellow daisies and red poppies are the poppies no matter if the poppies are in the foreground or the background. How about a tree full of American goldfinches in late spring? Those neon yellow bodies will definitely

Have you checked your local bookstore recently? The summer edition of *Nature's Best* magazine hit the newsstands June 1 and features a story on four prominent female wildlife/outdoor photographers from around the world. Believe it or not, I'm one of them. This exciting magazine is full of great information, top-notch photographs, photography tips and rules for the "Dream Assignment" photo contest offering a \$10,000 prize. Get your copy today as there are a limited number available!



Safety

by Col. William Antozzi, Boating Safety Officer

Courtesy Afloat

Here it is summer and the boaters are out in full force. As in many sports, everyone doesn't see eye to eye about how boating should be conducted. The fishermen pursue a rather quiet sport, whereas the speed boats and personal watercraft (jet ski) make a lot of noise and wake. Fishermen are not too happy about the wake, especially when a fast moving vessel comes closer than seems necessary. Operators of sailboats, canoes, kayaks and other slow moving boats are also irritated when a fast moving boat operator shows lack of consideration. The answer to all of this is for all boaters to respect the rights of other boatmen.

Too often, people operate boats without ever having learned the rules of the waterways. The first rule is, be careful of your wake. When passing another boat, slow down, whether the boat you pass is underway, anchored, or just drifting. The passengers in the other boat will respect your good judgement. Watch your wake in harbors, marinas, or any place where boats are tied up or at anchor. Another rule is: when meeting another boat head on, steer to the right as if you were driving a car. If a boat approaches from your right, it has the right of way; if from the left, you have the right of way. If a boat gives one blast on a whistle or horn, it means "Pass on my port." If you hear two blasts, it means "Pass on my starboard." Make sure you know port from starboard. It is true, but sad, that many boaters do not. Boats being overtaken by other boats have the right of way.

Captain Jim Kerrick, former Safety Officer for the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries said, "Show consideration for others when at a launching ramp by hav-

ing your boat ready to slip off the trailer before you get it to the ramp." When pulling a boat out of the water, get it onto the trailer quickly and get off the ramp as fast as possible when others are waiting. Pull the trailer to an out-of-the-way spot to do your final tying down and tidying up. Don't be a showoff. It is almost sure to result in an accident with possible injury. That type of boatman impresses only himself

and possibly a law enforcement officer.

Courtesy and common sense, if used, reduce boating accidents. Make sure your boat is safe. For a free courtesy marine examination, call (804) 732-8785 (Petersburg area), (804) 520-1705 (Colonial Heights area) or (804) 272-2045 (Richmond). If your boat passes the inspection you will be awarded a beautiful Coast Guard decal. □



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July Affield

by Jack Randolph

Talk to someone about bobbing for eels and right away the uninitiated conjure up thoughts of someone trying to grab up an eel with his teeth—like bobbing for apples. Bobbing for eels is an entirely different thing. Come to think about it, eels are pretty different things.

What brought eels to mind are the memories of pleasant July evenings spent along meandering farmland creeks fishing for eels and catfish. When I was a young man the snake-like eels ranked higher up the social scale than they do today. Nowadays most fishermen prefer to catch their fish on artificial lures, something that seldom appeals to eels. Also, eels don't lend themselves to tournament fishing. I don't believe I've ever heard of an eel tournament, but it's a thought.

Catch and release was invented by guys who caught eels by mistake. I even had one angling buddy who's rule, when it came to eels, was "catch-and-run-away-from." He was deathly afraid of snakes and eels were too close for him.

Even the most avid admirer of eels has to admit that they are really something else. To begin with eels are catadromous fish which is the reverse of anadromous. Most of us are familiar with anadromous fish that live in the sea and return to freshwater to spawn. That crowd includes such species as salmon, striped bass, sturgeon, shad, and herring. The eel, on the other hand, lives in freshwater and makes a one-way trip to the sea, somewhere in the South Atlantic, the fabled Sargasso Sea, to spawn. Oddly, European eels, which are very much like American eels (I've caught them in Germany and couldn't see any difference.) do the same thing and spawn in close proximity to the American eels. However, only rarely do European eels end up in the Western Hemisphere. I remember reading of one

found off of Georgia some years ago. The guys who go around doing that sort of thing can tell the difference between New World and Old World eels by counting vertebrae or some such thing. I have also read of an eel spawning area east of the Philippines where Asiatic eels spawn.

The mature eels, like Pacific salmon, die after spawning and almost miraculously the minute larvae, which soon become tiny eels, find their way back to the shores of their ancestors. As tiny elvers, about 2 ½ inches long, the baby eels enter the streams and struggle to establish a new home range well upstream. Dams stop some, but the baby eels can and do scale damp concrete to continue their return trip. I've watched them scale the dam on Swift Creek in Chesterfield. The females, which can attain lengths up to 40 inches, push inland while the males spend their lives in the saltwater and brackish estuaries. After several years the eels depart their freshwater homes, become silvery in color and return to the Sargasso Sea to complete the cycle.

I learned to appreciate the virtues of eels on the dinner table years ago. Smoked eel, to me, is a delicacy. They are also highly prized as bait. They are fun to catch at night on hooks baited with worms, crab or even a piece of liver, but they are squirmy and slimy and difficult to handle.

I had heard of bobbing for eels for years, but I wasn't convinced. According to legend to make an eel bob one needed a good supply of nightcrawlers. One by one the nightcrawlers are threaded on fine sewing thread by running the needle completely through the worm from one end to the other. When you had about six feet worth of worms you wrap them into a ball and tie the ball with stout line. The line, about a cane pole length, is tied to the tip of a

cane pole and you are ready to fish. In theory the eel would grab the bob and the thread would become tangled in its teeth.

My son and I made up several eel bobs one summer's night and tried fishing with them from a dock on Wards Creek on the James River. It was simply a matter of lowering the bob to the bottom where an eel promptly grabbed it. The eel's fine teeth quickly became entangled in the thread and all we had to do was lift the eel to the dock and shake it off.

Later I tried tying a bob to a spinning line and cast it out. It worked fine. It was just a matter of reeling in the eel, lifting it up and depositing it into a basket.



Mark Giovannetti

Eels are so lethal as bait they are not permitted for use on striped bass in Maryland during the spring season. For stripers, eels rigged on block tin spoons, called "rigged eels" are excellent lures. Such eels when rigged can be kept frozen, used and frozen again for later use. Some anglers scrape rigged eels giving them a blue color which is often more effective.

A live eel hooked through the tail is a dynamite bait for cobia and in freshwater, chunks of eel or even small live eels are earning such a reputation for catching big catfish that many bait shops are now carrying live eels. Trotliners long ago learned the virtues of cuts of eel as a catfish bait. □

Recipes

By Joan Cone

Shore Lunch

One of the joys of living in Virginia is that there are so many lakes and quiet river backwaters where you can ease your boat or canoe ashore in spring, summer or fall and enjoy a wonderful meal amidst beautiful outdoor scenery.

Of course, you should bear in mind that warm weather produces food spoilage and therefore a well-insulated cooler is important. You can use it later to carry your catch home.

Points to remember are:

1. Precool the cooler with plenty of ice in plastic bags. As it melts you can use it later for drinking water.
2. Never make sandwiches with mayonnaise. Instead, bring a small unopened jar and then keep it on ice after use.
3. Keep salad dressing in a separate container until ready to use.
4. Carry some extra snacks which don't need refrigeration.

MENU

Gazpacho

Grilled Whole Fish

Fish Fillets In Skillet

Corn Bread Rounds

Gazpacho

Make this cold soup before leaving home and keep it well-chilled.

- 4 cups tomato juice
- 1 cucumber, seeded and chopped
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 1 large tomato, seeded and chopped
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- ¼ cup vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- ⅛ teaspoon each onion salt and garlic powder

Combine ingredients in tightly covered container. Chill. Makes 6 servings.

Grilled Whole Fish

- 1 to 3 pound fish, cleaned, head and tail removed
- Butter or margarine
- 1 medium onion, sliced thin
- Salt and pepper
- Fresh parsley, dill or thyme

Tear off a piece of heavy duty aluminum foil that is a little larger than the fish. Spread a little butter in center of foil and arrange several onion slices on it. Place the fish over onion slices. Sprinkle opening in fish with salt and pepper. Arrange remaining onion slices and herbs over fish. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and dot with butter. Bring foil up over fish, sealing edges with a double fold. Seal both ends with double fold. Place on grate over a medium hot fire. Cook about 30 to 45 minutes, turning two or three times. Serve with softened butter to which chopped parsley and lemon juice have been added.

Fish Fillets in Skillet

- 1 egg, slightly beaten
- 2 tablespoons yellow mustard
- ½ teaspoon salt

- 1 ½ to 2 pounds fish fillets
- Mashed potato flakes
- Oil or melted shortening

Lightly beat together egg, mustard and salt in shallow pan. Dip fish in egg mixture, then roll in potato flakes, coating well. Fry in hot oil or shortening 3 to 4 minutes on each side, until fish flakes easily when pierced with a fork and is golden brown. Makes 4 to 5 servings.

Corn Bread Rounds

- 1 package (8 ounces) corn muffin mix
- 2 tablespoons nonfat dry milk powder
- 1 egg
- ⅓ cup water

Combine muffin mix and milk powder. Beat egg and water to blend; add to mix, stirring until just moistened. Drop in mounds of batter, using about 2 tablespoons for each mound, on lightly greased griddle or skillet. Cook over low heat, turning to brown both sides. This takes about 6 minutes in all. Makes 8 corn bread rounds. □



Coleman Co.

by Nancy Hugo

Butterfly Watching

July is a great time for butterfly watching; a professional society even sponsors an official Fourth of July butterfly count. The purpose of the count is to raise butterfly awareness and to document the number of butterflies of a particular species in a given area. But even if you don't know a swallowtail from a skipper, you can help raise the level of butterfly awareness by watching these flierworks on the Fourth.

Look for butterflies in places where they can bask in the sun, because they need warmth to raise their body temperatures and provide them the power for flight. Wildflowers in meadows and infrequently mown easements attract them, as do mud puddles. Scientists are not entirely sure why male butterflies gather at mud puddles in what are called "drinking clubs," but they think the butterflies may be after mineral salts in the water. Rotten fruit and animal scat (the fresher the better) attract butterflies, as does urine. Lepidopterist Robert Michael Pyle says butterfly watchers can use that last bit of information to their advantage, "social conditions permitting."

You can also watch butterflies in your own backyard, if you've planted the nectar sources that attract them. The best butterfly flowers are shaped in a way that both allows the butterfly's proboscis easy access to abundant nectar and provides a place where the butterfly can sit comfortably as it sips. Aster, zinnia, verbena, liatris, lantana, purple coneflower, coreopsis, and black-eyed Susan are among the best garden flowers to grow for butterflies, but the quintessential butterfly plants are butterfly bush (*Buddleia davidii*) and butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*). Butterfly bush is a

sun-loving shrub that requires little more than well-drained soil. Its flowers are usually lavender with orange centers (there are also deep purple, white and even pink varieties) and all of them are like butterfly magnets. One naturalist reported counting a dozen species of butterflies on his butterfly bush on a single July day!

Our native butterfly weed is equally attractive to butterflies. Its flat clusters of yellow, red, or orange (usually orange) flowers are not only nectar-rich, their flat surfaces provide a perfect landing pad for butterflies. In July, a butterfly weed without a butterfly on it is as unusual as a beach without a sunbather. To grow these plants in the garden, start them from seed or buy nursery grown plants. Do not try to dig them from the wild. Not only is this a conservation no-no, it's unlikely to work. Butterfly weed has a long tap root that is easily damaged and does not like to be disturbed. You can collect seeds from wild plants (like all milkweeds, their long pods split open to release flat, dark brown seeds with a fluff of down on the end), or you can buy them from seed catalogs. If you collect the seeds yourself, separate the fluff from them before sowing. [Every winter my husband starts a flat of butterfly weed seeds in the house in late winter and we plant them out in late spring. Sometimes it takes a couple of years for them to reach flowering size and you have to remember where you've planted them because they disappear entirely in the winter, but they'll reemerge in late spring to produce bigger and bigger plants each year.]

Remember, too, that to have butterflies we also need to have caterpillars and that a pesticide that kills

all leaf-eating caterpillars will kill butterfly caterpillars. Even an organic pesticide like BT kills all leaf-eating caterpillars, not just the troublesome ones. Butterfly larvae are also really finicky about what they eat (a good butterfly field guide will tell you which plants host which butterfly caterpillars), and providing larval food sources is important. According to naturalist John Dennis, it is the lack of larval foods, not the lack of nectar-producing flowers, that is responsible for the lack of butterflies in many urban and suburban neighborhoods. Letting small areas of our yards grow wild will often provide many of these larval foods, because many plants that volunteer in such areas—plants like clovers, vetches, violets, and milkweeds—are the very plants certain butterfly caterpillars need.

For more information about butterflies and their habits, read Robert Michael Pyle's *Handbook for Butterfly Watchers*. Even without color illustrations, it proves Pyle's belief that even if they were gray creatures, butterflies would be worth watching for their behavior alone. Pyle will alert you, for example, to the "powerful sailing of the swallowtails," the "maddening darting of the hairstreaks," the "flapping of the sulphurs," and he'll infect you with his enthusiasm for this outdoor activity that's less bewildering to beginners than wildflower identification and more "up close and personal" than bird-watching.

So pull up your lawn chair and take a fresh look at your backyard butterflies. Their show's as good as a fireworks display, and you don't have to wait for the sun to go down to see it. □



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